

Criminalisation of cricket

Does the ideal of cricket as found in classical test cricket still exist? We are afraid that the glory of cricket is gradually evaporating under the impact of commercialisation of cricket, which begets its criminalisation. Is cricket a lucrative trade or a game?

MD. SHAIRUL MASHREQUE

CRIMINALISATION of cricket is contemporaneous with the negative aspects of its globalisation process. This kingly game, once a pastime of the aristocratic families, is stumbling on to a sorry state of affairs. Cricket, especially test cricket, has been a tradition since time immemorial.

The scions of aristocratic lineage in England contributed to the development of cricket. Subsequently, it became popular in the subcontinent once ruled by the British Raj. Most cricket players and elites of cricket clubs were nabobs and maharajas and some title holding families in British India.

The father of cricket G.W. Grace would perhaps have liked all good traditions anchored in cricket to be maintained. MCC shaped the dreams of the pioneers of cricket, with ICC nourishing and institutionalising cricket with rules and codes of conduct. Of course, the rules of the game are updated if necessary.

Cricket lovers want that cricket be played in ideal settings. They expect the cricketers to be dedicated in upholding

the spirit of professionalism. Cricket has its own style of manifestation, reflecting its character with idiosyncratic features. Many cricketers of the past were well known as role models -- Frank Worrell, Walcott, Gary Sobers, V. Mankad, Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi, Sunil Gavaskar, Boycott, Cowdrey, Hanif Mohammed, Majed Khan, Bradman, Simpson, to name a few.

Does the ideal of cricket as found in classical test cricket still exist? We are afraid that the glory of cricket is gradually evaporating under the impact of commercialisation of cricket, which begets its criminalisation. Is cricket a lucrative trade or a game? Distressingly, the way that the actors in the management structure and the players are conducting themselves under the intoxication of money is sure to destroy the image of cricket.

Degeneration has crept into cricket in the wake of commercialisation. Kerry Packer, who introduced one-day and night cricket, set the tone of modernisation of cricket and thus paved the way to its degeneration. Kerry Packer staged the "Packer Circus," enticing many veteran test players to join the circus with heavy cash allurements. He was charged with breaking conventional cricket, thus

polluting the cricket environment.

Now, cricket is in disarray because of unethical and corrupt practices. TV also attracts the cricket stars and many have appeared in commercial advertisement as models. How funny! Cricket has become intrinsically linked with money, thus making room for unhealthy practices.

The shadow of the influence of Packer's show has been marked by the introduction of ultra-modern cricket with much fanfare, decoration, music and dance. ICL appeared in the scenario, holding sway for sometime, and those joining it were banned by the cricket board and the ICC. Later on, IPL was introduced to neutralise the influence of ICL.

Many may allege that both ICL and IPL committed the same misdeeds, attracting national players to boost their bank balance. Allegations have been brought against some controversial figures in the cricket boards too, especially in India and Pakistan, who are ruling the roost and are responsible for the considerable damage to national cricket.

Cricket was taken over by criminal syndicates of match fixers and bookies during the 1990's. In fact, some Pakistani cricketers fell prey to the criminalisation of cricket. It has by now reached dizzying heights, with many Pak cricketers alleged to be involved in criminal activities. PCB never did take a serious view of it, and only carried out probes that were merely eye wash.

But BCCI took serious action against match fixing, expelling superstars like

Azharuddin and Jadeja. Hansie Cronje of South Africa was expelled for committing the same crime. One may argue that cricketers are like other professionals, and they have every right to join an alternative lucrative source of income. But hankering after money, women and food at the cost of national prestige cannot be tolerated.

The news of a betting scam in the last test between England and Pakistan is really mind-boggling. According to a report, Pakistan's cricket team was embroiled in an alleged betting scam after British police arrested a well-known bookmaker on suspicion of conspiracy during a Test match against England. He paid £150,000 pounds (\$230,000, •185,000 euros) to a middleman in return for details about the timing of three no-balls in the match. Two Pakistan bowlers, Mohammad Aamer and Mohammad Asif, delivered the blatant no-balls at the exact points in the match agreed with the alleged fixer.

The Pakistan team manager said that the bowlers and captain Salman Butt had been interviewed by Scotland Yard detectives about the allegations. The newspaper published a photograph of the alleged middleman, Mazhar Majeed, counting wads of banknotes given to him by a reporter posing as a front man for a betting syndicate. Pakistan team manager Yawar Saeed confirmed that Scotland Yard detectives had visited the team's hotel on Saturday and had spoken to Aamer, Asif and skipper Butt, and took away the three players' mobile phones. Imran Khan was extremely agitated, and

asked the authorities to expel the "criminals."

Pakistan was left reeling by the latest allegations of match-fixing to plague the country's beloved cricket team, with former stars and officials demanding life bans for the implicated players. Former spinner and chief selector Iqbal Qasim termed the allegations, which centered on the ongoing fourth Test against England at Lords, as a "great mishap." He said: "As far as I know, players have been accused of fancy fixing, to bowl no-balls,

so they all must be investigated seriously and then strict action must be taken against those who are proved guilty.

This unprecedented scandal that has stigmatised Pak cricket would never have happened had PCB taken serious punitive action against those who were previously involved in such scams. This recent scam is a wake up call to Bangladesh cricket. I think BCCB should be circumspect as a watchdog.

Dr. Md. Shairul Mashreque is Professor, Department of Public Administration, Chittagong University.



No more a gentleman's game?

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism prompts immigrant communities to practice two cultures -- the culture of the host society and that of their countries of origin. This, indeed, is a blessing, as it instills a sense of global citizenship in the psyche of the immigrant community.

MD. ANWARUL KABIR

WITH the integration of different immigrant groups, the UK has already transformed itself into a multicultural society. A multicultural society does not stress on assimilation, rather it gives emphasis on integration. Integration encourages the immigrants to preserve their own identity.

The British view is so liberal that the UK is considering incorporating Muslim Sharia, especially those applicable to Muslim family law. So, in the UK, we find different communities like African, Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and many others visibly practicing their own cultural heritages without barriers -- at least at the policy level.

In the UK, among the ethnic minori-

ties, the Bengali-speaking people are the fourth largest group, and among the immigrant South Asian groups, the Bangladeshi community is ranked third. According to 2001 census, the number of UK Bangladeshis is about 300,000. More than 95% of this community comes from Sylhet.

The kinship among the Sylheti people is very strong, and even in the UK they have preserved their own Sylheti dialect. Understanding the importance of the Sylheti dialect among the community, the various organisations in the UK translate their official documents into both standard Bangla and Sylheti dialect.

Multiculturalism prompts immigrant communities to practice two cultures -- the culture of the host society and that of their countries of origin. This, indeed, is a blessing, as it instills a

sense of global citizenship in the psyche of the immigrant community. The sense of global citizenship intermingled with the growth of globalisation has created the concept of diaspora.

UK-Bangladeshis are now the major constituent of the Bangladeshi diaspora. Although the second generation of the UK Bangladeshi is leading the community and the third generation is coming up, they feel close affinity with their counter part in Sylhet for obvious reasons. This does not imply that they are failing to integrate with the mainstream British society.

A survey carried out by the UK's Department for Communities and Local Government has revealed that:

- 88% of people of Bangladeshi origin in the UK felt that they belonged to Britain. This compares with 84% of white people;
- 78% of people of Bangladeshi origin in the UK felt that they belonged to their local community. This compares with 75% of white people;
- 50% of people of Bangladeshi origin in the UK believe they can influence decisions that affect their local area. This compares with 37% of white people;

The above findings confirm that UK Bangladeshis are on the right track in

the process of social integration. The UK Bangladeshis are advancing in the realm of education too. Bangladeshi children have overtaken Pakistanis at school; they have even narrowed the gap with Indians, the most successful south Asian group. Not only in education, the share of this community in the mainstream job market has also increased dramatically.

UK-Bangladeshis -- Sylhetis in particular -- are very keen to keep their ties with Sylhet, where the root of their cultural heritage is to be traced. So, it is imperative on part of the British government to pay special attention to the development of Sylhet with a view to speeding up the integration process of the UK Bangladeshi community.

The British High Commission has many things to do beyond diplomacy. This is not because we still follow the British legacy in many aspects of our lives. Rather this should be for promoting our own community -- the UK Bangladeshis. As both Bangladesh and the UK have conferred this community with the dual citizenship, both the governments have a responsibility to look after its proper development.

What the British High Commission in Bangladesh can do in this respect is

to initiate some special programmes focussing on Sylhet, which may help Bangladeshi settlers in the UK a lot. Some programmes are stated below:

- **Setting up an English language learning centre:** The migration from Sylhet to the UK is a continuous process. Through matrimonial relationship, every year a large number of Sylhetis migrate to the UK. Besides, many other migrate following the process of chain migration. In most cases, these people, after getting to the UK, face a communication barrier as they know little or no English at all. The proposed English learning centre will train such aspirant migrants in communicative English prior to their migration.
- **Setting up a catering training institute:** The majority of Bangladeshis in the UK are either directly or indirectly dependent on the catering business. This industry generates more than £3.5 billion a year and creates employment. However, recently, the Bangladeshi restaurants in the UK have been facing severe labour crisis. The Bangladesh Caterers Association has estimated that at present there

are 27,500 vacancies in UK-Bangladeshi restaurants. To save this industry, new migration from Bangladesh is a must. Setting up a catering training institute in Sylhet will help much to resolve the ongoing crisis in the UK Bangladeshi restaurants. After receiving proper training in the proposed institute, the new migrants will be able to resolve the present crisis.

- **Establishing an advocacy centre:** Many expatriates from the UK come to Sylhet and want to invest money in some income generating projects. The proposed advocacy centre may encourage and guide them in this regard.

- **Setting up a migration research institute:** The population migration in Sylhet is the highest among all regions in Bangladesh. It will be easier to get the empirical data on migration in Sylhet. The proposed research institute will help the policy makers and academics (both national and international) to understand the nature, process, extent of the population migration and its impacts on the society.

Md. Anwarul Kabir is a university academic at AIUB. E-mail: kabiranwar@yahoo.com

IN MEMORIAM

Noorjehan Murshid

SONIA AMIN

MY first memory of Noorjehan Murshid is as my teacher in Class I (or maybe II) in Viharunnisa Noon School. I cannot recall what subject she taught us. What I do remember is the word I would have associated with her, though the limited vocabulary of a little girl did not have it at her disposal then, "grace." The grace that lies somewhere in between kindness and strength of character.

It was customary for students at the school to address teachers as "apa." Later, I would address her as "chachi," because of my friendship with her daughters and sons whom I got to know during the time we spent in Calcutta working at the same war news data collection organisation in 1971.

A word of appreciation from the aerial beings, our teachers (who did not, according to us lowly students, have a mundane existence outside the halo of their classroom rostrum), would make our day. And a note of disapproval could plunge us into an abyss of self-doubt. Such was the nature of our reverence.

So imagine my surprise when one day I saw Noorjehan apa supervising the construction of a house right next door to ours on Satmasjid Road. I walked up



Noorjehan Murshid

shyly to where she was giving instructions to the masons. On seeing me, she drew me close and asked kindly what I was doing there. I must have mumbled something about living next door -- but the fact that a teacher had remembered my name filled a little girl, poised on the brink of uncertainty, with a warm glow.

My next encounter with the Murshid family was during the War of Liberation. Noorjehan Murshid's daughter Tazeen, and two sons Firdous and Kumar, worked in the Bangladesh Information

Cell housed in Netaji Bhaban (Subhas Chandra Bose's residence), while her other daughter had joined the Free Bangladesh singing troupe.

After liberation, Mrs. Murshid became deeply involved in the social and political reconstruction of a war ravaged country. She became close to Bangabandhu and was not only an elected member of Parliament from the Awami League, but also the minister for health during the regime.

Shortly afterwards, Professor Sarwar Murshid was appointed as Bangladesh's ambassador to Poland and the family went abroad. In the midst of all this, Mrs. Murshid raised a family and, along with her husband, infused a large part of the spirit, tenacity and work ethic she herself lived by into her children.

It is quite remarkable that a woman born in 1924 in Murshidabad, in an enlightened family but within the milieu of the conservative Muslim society, studied at the Victoria Institution in Calcutta, and later at Calcutta University (Masters in Islamic History and Culture, 1945).

This was at a time when most of the less fortunate middle-class Bengali Muslims were struggling against immense odds to pick up the rudiments of a skeletal education within the confines of the andar-mahal.

In an age when few women of the more advanced Brahma/Hindu community stepped out into the public sphere she served as the principal of Barisal Girls' School and the superintendent of Mannujan Hostel.

The same year (1946), she joined the All India Radio Service. She was the first Muslim woman to do so. After partition she joined Radio Pakistan in Dhaka. But her true vocation lay in the arena of politics and social work.

Noorjehan Murshid was one of the few women from that period to engage in politics. Her involvement started soon after graduation. In 1946, on her way to a meeting organised by the Muslim League on Direct Action Day at the Islamiya College, Calcutta, the terrible Hindu-Muslim riots broke out.

She and a few other girls were unable to return home. They sought refuge in the Millat office and stayed there for about a month, joining Hussein Shaheed Suhrawardy in his efforts to restore harmony to the mutilated city. She also met Gandhi at Sealdah Station during this period and received his blessings.

Politics and social work ran in her veins. As did writing, nurturing a family, editing, even acting (in early life). Her emergence as an elected member of parliament, first from the Jukto Front

Party in 1954 and then as a member of the Awami League in the historic election of 1970, and service in post-liberation Bangladesh is now part of our history.

This is specially remarkable when we stop to reflect that today the women of Bangladesh are still clamouring for representation in parliament through direct election!

A few years after returning to Bangladesh from the USA, I embarked on one of my most arduous adventures -- the pursuit of a PhD. It was at this point (around 1991) that I reconnected with Noorjehan Murshid. This time, I went on a totally different mission.

I was doing research on social/gender history of colonial Bengal -- the transformation of the Bengali Muslim middle class from tradition to modernity. This involved reconstruction of the trajectory that led to the emergence of the modern Bengali bhadramahila (gentlewoman) -- counterpart to the bhadralok -- a specific historical and social category used by eminent historians.

My application concerned the Muslim community in particular, and was the story of our foremothers and our own emergence. In this historical reconstruction, interviews of women born at

the beginning of the 20th Century were important source material.

Noorjehan Murshid was one of my interviewees. As we talked in the lovely study built into a verandah in the house (where I had long ago spied her laying the foundation stone), she expressed her appreciation of the work -- the retrieval of histories lost.

Three interviewees made me comfortable enough to approach some sensitive issues necessary for my understanding of the lives of the bhadramahila. Noorjehan Murshid was one of them. She did it with such -- and I use the word again -- grace.

Till the end she remained the Renaissance woman, a product of the finer things of the transformation that had been taking place since the times of Raja Rammohun Roy and Vidyasagar.

I met her often after that -- the girl student had now grown to be a chronicler of past lives such as hers. I saw her health failing, her body growing somewhat more fragile as time took its toll. But it was also evident at that time that whatever havoc time is capable of wreaking, it cannot rob a person of the one quality that will always elude its tyranny -- grace.

Professor Sonia Amin teaches History at the University of Dhaka.